

# **Henry Adams records for "Victor Schreckengost and 20th Century Design" 1111.029**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Ingalls Library and Museum Archives  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Ingalls Library and Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Adams, Henry, 1949-
<b>Title</b>	Henry Adams records for "Victor Schreckengost and 20th Century Design"
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1929-2001
<b>Extent</b>	3.0 Cubic feet [3 cubic feet, 7 audio cassettes, 1 oversize box]
<b>General Physical Description note</b>	This collection includes paper, photographs, audio, and CD-R
<b>Language</b>	English

### Preferred Citation note

The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of Henry Adams. "Viktor Schreckengost and 20th Century Design," Series [number], date, and/or short description of document.

## Biographical/Historical note

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Over his seventy-year career Viktor Schreckengost was a potter, an artist, an industrial designer, a teacher, and a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. He often assumed many of these roles concurrently. Viktor was born in 1906 in Sebring, Ohio. His father and most of his extended family worked in Sebring pottery factories. Viktor was one of six children, all but one of whom had careers in the pottery and ceramics industry. Viktor began working in the French China pottery factory as a young child at eight or nine. By the time he graduated from high school Viktor had worked in every stage of the ceramic process, including in the final finishing and decorating shops, mastering the pottery business. Viktor developed his artistic talents at a young age. He and his brothers and sisters would draw, sculpt clay figurines for toys, and participate in design competitions created by their parents to occupy the children. All of these activities influenced Viktor's future career. After graduation from high school Viktor worked for a year at the Gem Clay Forming Company designing patterns for mantle rings. He also freelanced design work for the other potteries in Sebring.

In 1925 Viktor enrolled in the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA), then known as the Cleveland School of Art. He was a straight-A student who was elected class president four years in a row. Viktor received scholarships for his second through fourth years at the school. During his time at CIA Viktor formed life-long friendships with teachers Paul Travis, Frank Wilcox and Guy Cowan; and businessmen in the community. These friendships often lead to business opportunities. He graduated in 1929, receiving the Departmental First Prize in design and the Mary Cushing Page Scholarship for graduate study abroad. Viktor chose to complete his graduate study at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna, Austria because he admired the ceramic sculpture work of Michael Powolny, an instructor at the school. While at the Kunstgewerbeschule Viktor studied ceramics and ceramic sculpture.

Viktor returned to Cleveland in 1930 and soon established himself as both a fine artist and designer, becoming part of a group of artists known as the Cleveland School. By the end of the decade Viktor had earned a national reputation as both an artist and designer. Viktor's career as a fine artist was enhanced by the Cleveland Museum of Art's annual May Show, where Viktor regularly won prizes; and the Ceramic National Exhibition held in Syracuse, New York. Viktor won prizes less frequently at the Ceramic National Exhibition due to the higher level of competition. Viktor also frequently served on the jury for the Exhibition making his work ineligible for awards. However through the Ceramic National Exhibition his work gained national visibility.

Viktor's fine art took many forms over the years. He created drawings and watercolors. He also designed stage sets and costumes for performances at the Eldred Theater of Western Reserve University and summer productions at Cain Park in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. His designs were well-reviewed. Viktor also designed costumes for the 1939 Akron Rubber Ball. Viktor continued his work in clay and ceramics creating sculpture, pottery, and monumental architectural sculpture in relief. Viktor's sculpture falls into a number of thematic categories including animals, ceramic heads, African-American subjects, political sculpture, slab forms, cast and monumental sculpture, academic sculpture, and memorials, trophies and public sculpture. Most notable of this last group are the Culver Air Trophy honoring the winner of the women's air race at the Miami All-American Air Maneuvers in Florida and the O'Neill Memorial in

Cleveland, Ohio remembering Hugh M. O'Neill who played a major role in establishing Cleveland's mounted police unit. Viktor's pottery includes intricately decorated plates, bowls, and other vessels of varying shapes. At the request of his friend architect J. Byers Hays, Viktor also designed and fabricated large architectural relief sculptures for the bird and pachyderm houses at the Cleveland Zoo and for the 1954 extension of Lakewood High School in Lakewood, Ohio.

In 1930 Viktor accepted a position working part time teaching at CIA and part time at Cowan Pottery, which was founded by Viktor's former instructor Guy Cowan. At CIA, Viktor integrated the design training he received in Vienna into his classes, establishing a design program at CIA in 1933. Viktor continued to teach at CIA for seventy years, where he taught and influenced some of the country's most notable industrial designers. Many have established careers in the automobile and toy industry. It was Viktor's work at Cowan Pottery that began his career in industrial design. One of Viktor's most famous pieces, the Jazz Bowl was produced at Cowan Pottery. The first Jazz Bowl was a commission for Eleanor Roosevelt. Cowan liked the design of the Jazz Bowl so much that he decided to put it into production. The form of the Jazz Bowl changed over time as Viktor worked with Cowan to produce it more efficiently. While at Cowan Viktor also designed a set of Sports Plates and experimented with glazes and patterns on vessels of various shapes.

After Cowan Pottery went out of business in 1931 Viktor focused his attention on designing dinnerware, primarily for American Limoges. Viktor designed dinnerware to be functional, durable, affordable, and efficient for mass production; and aesthetically pleasing in shape and decoration. A number of Viktor's dinnerware designs are well-known and worth mentioning. His first major design was Econo-Rim (1932) produced by Onandaga Pottery in Syracuse, New York. The design proved popular in hotels and restaurants and was still in production 77 years after it was first produced. Viktor designed a number of sets of dinnerware for American Limoges during the 1930's including Peasant Ware (1932), Americana (1934), Manhattan (1935), and Triumph (1937). Both the Manhattan and Triumph shapes were available in different decorating schemes including solid colors, Flower Shop, and Animal Kingdom patterns. Some of Viktor's dinnerware designs can be found in major museums. Viktor's dinnerware designs included pieces from plates to coffee pots.

In the post-World War II years Viktor designed for Salem China where he was art director through the mid 1950's. Viktor's designs for Salem China were less geometric and more free-form, biomorphic shapes with watercolor and women's fashion-inspired decorations. Two of the more common designs for Salem China were Tempo and Free Form. Viktor is regarded as the "first modern designer of dinnerware in this country." ( Henry Adams. Viktor Schreckengost and 20th-Century Design. Cleveland, OH: The Cleveland Museum of Art, distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 2000, 96.)

Viktor's design work also included industrial designs for wheel-products, which were well-recognized. In 1932 Viktor designed the first cab-over-engine truck for White Motor Company of Cleveland, Ohio. His design allowed for an additional five feet of cargo space. Throughout his career Viktor also designed cabinets, fans, chairs, toys, lights, lighting systems, and printing equipment. Viktor is best-known for his work with the Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company designing bicycles and pedal cars. Viktor began at Murray in 1936. Prior to his work there Viktor had never designed a bicycle. Ultimately he was responsible for designing every product that Murray produced. Viktor began designing pedal cars in 1938. Over the years the cars took on a variety of shapes including the Fire Chief Car, Pursuit Plane, Champion car, Super De Luxe 4-Ball Bering Wagon, Speedway Pace Car, a car shaped like a torpedo, and an ice cream truck. The unifying principles for all of Viktor's pedal cars were that they had to have authentic

detail, appeal to children's imaginations, be scaled and ergonomic for children, be affordable and efficient to produce and ship to retailers, and be practical and safe for use (i.e. the wings on the pursuit plane were designed to fit through standard doorways). Viktor's designs kept Murray on top of the pedal car market. Viktor's pedal car designs led to designs for children's strollers and riding lawn mowers.

Viktor also designed bicycles for Murray. Murray bicycles were marketed chiefly through Sears, Roebuck & Company and Western Auto, and later through K-Mart and other discount stores. At the height of his career Viktor designed bicycles under 108 different labels. Like his pedal car designs Viktor's goal with his bicycle designs was to appeal to riders' imaginations while creating a product that was affordable and efficient to manufacture and ship. Viktor introduced the process of blind-welding into the bicycle manufacturing process, yielding a stronger product and time savings in manufacturing and clean-up. Some of Viktor's more recognizable designs include the streamlined, motorcycle-look Mercury (1939); J.C. Higgins (1948); the "supersonic look" Sears Spaceliner (1965); and the "supercharged," "kooky bike" Murray Mark II Eliminator (circa 1969). Viktor designed bicycles for Murray from 1939 to 1972 when he retired from the company, keeping Murray at or near the forefront of bicycle design for over 30 years.

During World War II, Viktor volunteered for the US Naval Reserves. Viktor was assigned to work for Captain (later Admiral) Luis de Florez, who was in charge of a special devices section charged with finding novel ways to solve military problems. Viktor was assigned the task of developing a method for interpreting the blips and beeps of newly developed radar technology. Viktor worked at Landfall Studio working on the interrelated projects of "developing an effective program of radar recognition and producing accurate terrain models to guide bombing missions" and invasions (Adams 21.) When the war ended Viktor became the commanding officer at the Naval Research Center in New York, NY, where he worked on research projects to determine how best to transmit orders through static and fit amputees with artificial limbs. He also installed a major exhibition at the New York Hall of Science on naval training and naval science. He left the Navy in 1946.

From November 12, 2000 to February 4, 2001, The Cleveland Museum of Art mounted a retrospective exhibition of both Viktor's fine art and design work, curated by the curator of American Painting, Henry Adams. The show was well received and Viktor was often present at the exhibition signing catalogs and talking with visitors. Viktor stated that he enjoyed the balance in his career between design work and artistic work, some of which now is part of the collections of prominent museums. One morning on his way to work at CIA he counted 32 items that he had designed including exhaust fans, lawn mowers, toys, trucks, and lighting fixtures. "It was just as exciting to me" he notes, "as going to the art museum and seeing one of my paintings." (Adams, 152.)

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## Scope and Contents note

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The records of Henry Adams document his research for the exhibition and the exhibition catalogue "Victor Schreckengost and 20th Century Design" which was on display at The Cleveland Museum of Art from November 12, 2000 to February 4, 2001. The collection has been divided into seven series:

Biographical Information, Subject Files, Correspondence, Exhibition records, Photographs, Audio cassettes, and Conservation (added August 2003).

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## Arrangement note

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Arranged by series, thereunder by subseries, thereunder usually alphabetically or chronologically.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Ingalls Library and Museum Archives

### Conditions Governing Access note

Subject to review by archives staff. For more information or to access this collection contact archives staff at [archives2@clevelandart.org](mailto:archives2@clevelandart.org).

### Processing Information note

Processed by Hillary Bober, completed March 2003. An accretion from the Conservation Department (A2001.070) was received and processed August 2003.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Personal Name(s)

- Schreckengost, Victor, 1906-2008

### Subject(s)

- Art -- Ohio -- Cleveland -- Exhibitions.
- Artists -- Ohio -- Cleveland.
- Cleveland Museum of Art.
- Design -- United States -- History -- 20th century -- Exhibitions.
- Designers -- Ohio -- Cleveland -- Biography.
- Industrial design -- United States -- History -- 20th century -- Exhibitions.



## Biographical Information

## Collection Inventory

## Biographical Information

## Scope and Contents note

Biographical Information primarily contains information about Viktor's artistic and design work. Viktor and his family were diligent record keepers who tracked every art object Viktor created. They created a cross-referenced card file system. The cards list all the exhibitions of Viktor's work both alphabetically by gallery name and chronologically from 1929-1997. A second set of cards lists all objects Viktor created alphabetically by object title. The collection includes photocopies of both sets of cards. These cards facilitated the creation of timelines of Viktor's professional career and exhibitions and an object chronology for 1939 through 1969. The series includes copies of Viktor's patents for his industrial design work and biographical information on Viktor from the Cleveland Institute of Art 1996 exhibition. Lastly, the series contains material gathered for Viktor's nomination for the National Medal of Art.

	Box	Folder
Timeline: personal, professional and exhibitions	1	1
Schreckengost Awards	1	2
Cleveland Institute of Art- 1996 Schreckengost exhibit: label copy and correspondence 1996	1	3
Object chronology (1939-1969)	1	4
Exhibition cards- alphabetical by gallery name	1	5

## Biographical Information

Exhibition cards (chronological) 1929-1947	1	6
Exhibition cards (chronological) 1948-1962	1	7
Exhibition cards (chronological) 1963-1982	1	8
Exhibition cards (chronological) 1983-1997	1	9
Object cards- A-B	2	1
Object cards- C-D	2	2
Object cards- E-F	2	3
Object cards- G-I	2	4
Object cards- J-N	2	5
Object cards- O-R	2	6
Object cards- S-T	3	1
Object cards- U-Z and "Extra"	3	2
Patents #93,959-194,158	3	3
Patents #194,324-221,120	3	4

## Subject Files

Patents #2,516,705-2,798,739	3	5
Patents- Chronological list of patents, miscellaneous notes, and Not "Viktor" Schreckengost patents	3	6
Schreckengost nomination for National Medal of Arts- correspondence and materials 1993-1996, 1999	3	7
Viktor Schreckengost Nomination Packet (used for various national medals, honors and awards)	10	5
<b>Subject Files</b>  <b>Scope and Contents note</b>  Subject files were created by Adams to facilitate writing the exhibition catalogue and determining sections of the exhibition. The subject files include text by Adams for portions of the catalogue, research materials, and photographs on a specific topic such as pedal cars or dinnerware. They also include correspondence and information from former students, collectors, and colleagues of Viktor's. The subject files are arranged alphabetically.		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
African-American subjects ceramics	3	9
Airport mural	3	10
John Axelrod; collector (biographical information on Schreckengost, catalog comments)	3	11

## Subject Files

Bicycles	4	1
Cleveland School of Art/Cleveland Institute of Art	4	2
Cowan [Pottery], Jazz Bowls	4	3
Culver Trophy 1939	4	4
Giusseppe Delana (Schreckengost's student)	4	5
Dinnerware	4	6
Exhibition catalog- introduction, stray thoughts/bits and pieces	4	7
General research/ Background material	4	8
May Show and Schreckengost	4	9
Murray Company	4	10
Nottingham-Spirk Design Associates (students of Schreckengost)/ Little Tikes	4	11
Pedal cars	4	12
Post-war industrial design	4	13

## Correspondence

Printing presses	4	14
Product advertisements	4	15
Sebring, Ohio	5	1
Stage designs	5	2
Fred Stross	5	3
Two-dimensional work	5	4
Trucks	5	5

## Correspondence

## Scope and Contents note

Correspondence has been arranged thematically as there was no original order. This arrangement seemed most logical because of the specific themes that were evident in the correspondence and in anticipation of the way researchers might approach the collection. Themes include requests for information, requests for loans, offers to tour the exhibition, the exhibition catalogue, and offers to loan objects to the exhibition.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
General (alphabetical)	5	6
Bicycle Museum (lender)	5	7

## Correspondence

Cincinnati Art Galleries	5	8
Cleveland Institute of Art	5	9
Documentary film on Schreckengost	5	10
Exhibition details (proposal-research-installation) in-house (alphabetical)	5	11
Exhibition touring (chronological)	5	12
Formal requests for loan/ loan documentation (alphabetical)	5	13
Stephen Knapp	5	14
Potential contacts (alphabetical by contact)	5	15
Private owners- offers to lend; request for more information (alphabetical)	5	16
Exhibition catalog	5	17
Requests for exhibition financial support (alphabetical by donor)	5	18
Requests for information on Schreckengost's work in collections (alphabetical)	5	19
Rowfant Club	5	20

## Exhibition

Viktor Schreckengost	5	21
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**Exhibition****Scope and Contents note**

This series contains all of the records dealing specifically with the CMA exhibition. These include exhibition committee minutes; internal correspondence about the exhibition concept, content, design and budget; NEA planing grant materials; exhibition checklists; audio tour scripts; new media initiatives; the exhibition comment book; press kit; and related lecture and symposium materials. The series also includes the transcripts for an oral history interview Adams conducted with Viktor between March 1998 and June 1999.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Exhibition Committee candidates	5	22
Exhibition Design Planning meeting minutes and correspondence	5	23
NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] grant materials	5	24
NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] grant proposal "American Icons Exhibition"	5	25
Object fact sheets	5	26
Exhibition lists (checklists 8/5/99, 8/6/99, 8/18/99, 8/30/99, 11/23/99, 2/3/00, 2/8/00, 7/13/00, 8/8/00, and n.d.; other object/ loan lists) 1999-2000	5	27

## Photographs

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New media initiatives concepts for exhibition	6	1
People to interview for Schreckengost documentary film	6	2
Audio tour script	6	3
Opening	6	4
Lecture materials and outlines	6	5
Schreckengost Symposium	6	6
Schreckengost interview transcripts No. 1-4 (March 1998 [no tape]; 5/21/98; 6/4/98; 6/9/98) 1998	6	7
Schreckengost interview transcripts No. 5-8 (7/3/98; 7/16/98; 7/31/98; 6/21/99 [no tape]) 1998-1999	6	8
Henry Adams- Miscellaneous notes	6	9
Comment Book (photocopies, oversize)	8	1
CMA Press Kit material	10	4
<b>Photographs</b>		
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>		



## Photographs

This series includes photographs of objects shown in and considered for the exhibition. The series also includes photographs of Viktor's fine art work taken by Adams at the Schreckengost home and photographs documenting an event featuring Viktor and Adams. There are also photocopies of photographs of Viktor in a variety of venues including a trip to Egypt and working at Murray.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Photos of objects at Schreckengost home (prints) by Adams	6	11
Photos of objects at Schreckengost home (negatives) by Adams	6	12
Photos from Robert E. Taylor from event with Schreckengost and Henry Adams	6	13
Photocopies of miscellaneous photos of Schreckengost and others (mostly identified)	6	14
CMA photographs of works in the exhibition [1]	9	1
CMA photographs of works in the exhibition [2]	9	2
CMA photographs of works in the exhibition [3]	9	3
CMA photographs of works in the exhibition [4]	9	4
CMA photographs; supplemental and historical photographs (some transparencies)	10	1
Photographs, including CMA photographs, colored photographs, historical photographs [1]	10	2

**Audio cassettes- interviews by Adams with Schreckengost**

Photographs, including CMA photographs, colored photographs, historical photographs [2]	10	3
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**Audio cassettes- interviews by Adams with Schreckengost 1998****Scope and Contents note**

This series contains the seven audio cassettes of Adams' interviews with Viktor from March 1998 to June 1999. The bulk of the interviews were conducted in June and July 1998. There were eight interview sessions. There are transcripts for all eight sessions. However, there are only audio cassettes for six of the interviews. The seventh cassette records Viktor speaking at the museum. There is no transcript for this recording. Please see Series 4 and 6 box lists for more information on the session dates for cassettes and transcripts.

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Cassette</b>
V. Schreckengost 5/21/98	8	2
V. Schreckengost 6/4/98	8	3
V. Schreckengost 6/9/98	8	4
V. Schreckengost 7/3/98	8	5
V. Schreckengost 7/16/98	8	6
V. Schreckengost 7/31/98	8	7

**Conservation (A2001.070)**

**Conservation - general****Scope and Contents note**

This series is an accretion from the Conservation Department (A2001.070). The records consist primarily of treatment files for the objects exhibited. The files and supplemental negatives are arranged numerically by incoming object number.

**Conservation - general**

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Correspondence (internal and external); packing list; packing and shipping schedule	6	14
Treatment Proposals (signed originals)	6	15
Incoming condition reports	6	16
Receipt: Incoming Objects	6	17
Loan Agreements	6	19
Examination Report - Schreckengost "Blue Revel" 1931	6	19
Object photograph negatives	6	20
TIF files (2 CD-R's, each with drive directory)	7	1
<b>Treatment Files (includes treatment proposal, treatment report and photographic documentation)</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>

## Treatment Files (includes treatment proposal, treatment report and photogr...

1964.1932, I-1999-001306	7	2
I-1999-001404	7	3
I-2000-001769/1, I-2000-001861	7	4
I-2000-001876/1, I-2000-001880/1, I-2000-001881/3, I-2000-001882/1, I-2000-001884/1, I-2000-001885/1, I-2000-001888/1	7	5
I-2000-001889/1, I-2000-001890/5, I-2000-001900/1, I-2000-001933/1, I2000-002099, I-2000-002102/1	7	6